

A storm in a proton pack

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

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Ghostbusters II *would* be a fondly remembered '80s classic had it not been for the existence of the *first* movie. That was Columbia Pictures' big mistake - Ghostbusters is so extraordinarily perfect that it couldn't fail to overshadow anything that followed. We've watched it dozens of times, owned the toys and the lunchbox, and wore the costumes complete with DIY proton packs. It wasn't so much a movie as a phenomenon.

Part II had several hurdles to bound from the outset. Due to the exponential popularity of the cartoon, Columbia insisted that the sequel be toned down in terms of swearing and other adult-oriented content because they knew kids would be hankering to see it. As a result, it morphed into a kind of live-action cartoon spin-off full of child-friendly jokes and character transformations that took their cues from the animated series.

Ray: Two in the box.

Egon: Ready to go.

Peter Venkman: We be fast.

Ray, Egon, Peter Venkman: They be slow.



Louis Tully: (waits at the bus stop only to find Slimer is driving the bus) Oh, it's you.

Louis Tully: (Slimer offers Louis to come aboard the bus)
Okay, but I didn't know you had your license.

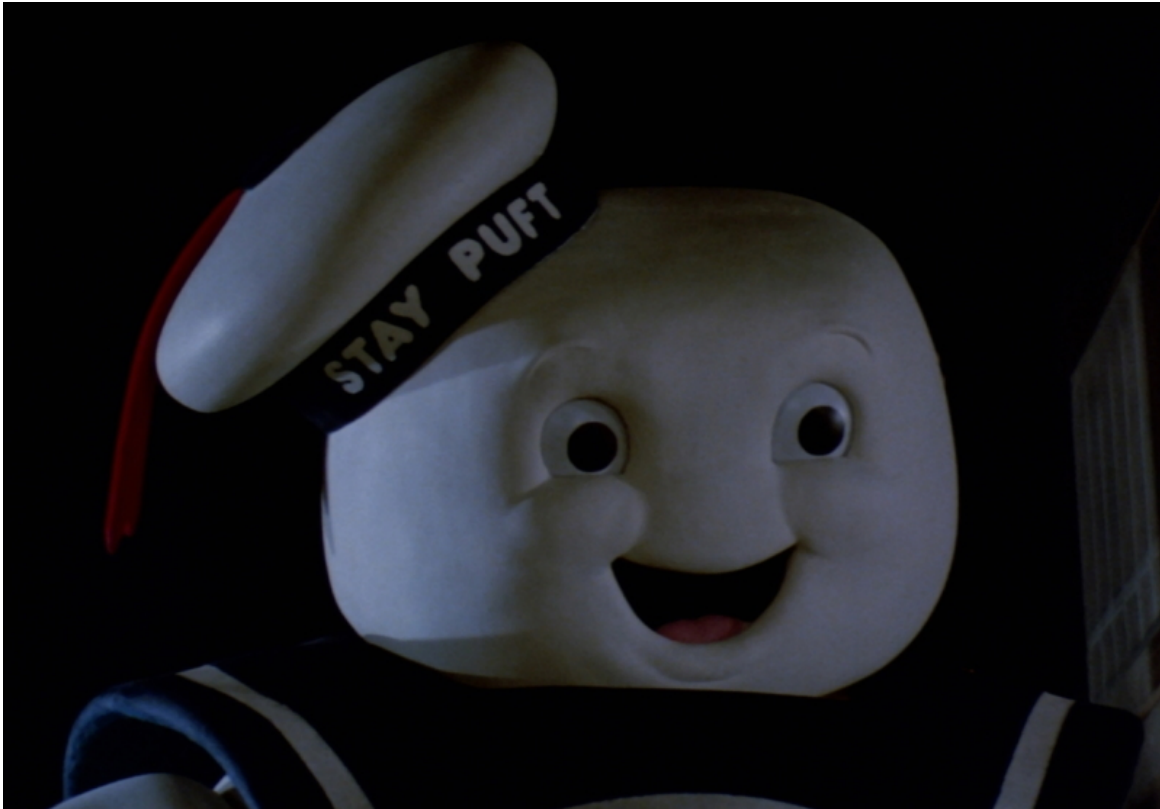
Otherwise, it can essentially be considered a remake of the first film, exploiting all the same plot devices, yet deployed in tweaked scenarios. Beginning from scratch, the down-on-their-luck nobodies must fight against the odds to become the Ghostbusters once again, thwarted at every turn by a hostile ensemble of non-believers.



Ray: (of the insulting birthday party kids) Ungrateful little yuppie larva. After everything we did for this city.

Winston: Yeah, we conjured up a hundred-foot marshmallow man, blew the top three floors off an uptown high-rise, and ended up getting sued by every city, county, and state agency in New York.

Ray: Yeah... but what a ride.



Over the last five years, for reasons that aren't explained, the former saviours of New York have become the bad guys to be ostracised, sued and incarcerated.

Judge Wexler: (At the Ghostbusters' trial) Before we begin this trial, I want to make one thing very clear: The law does not recognize the existence of ghosts, and I don't believe in them either. So I don't wanna hear a lot of malarkey about goblins, spooks, and demons. We're gonna stick to the facts in this case. Leave the ghost stories to the kiddies, understood?

Winston: Wow. Sounds like a pretty open-minded guy, huh?

Egon: Yeah, they call him "The Hammer."

Ray: What can we do? It's all in the hands of our lawyer now.

Louis Tully: I think you guys are making a big mistake. I do mostly tax law and some probate stuff occasionally. I got my

law degree at night school.

Ray: Well, that's fine, Louis. We got arrested at night.

Clearly the producers intended to reset the clock by returning the Ghostbusters to plucky underdog status, leveraging the opportunity to overcome tremendous adversity in order to deliver salvation once more.

Brownstone Boy #2: My dad says you guys are full of crap.

Ray: Well, some people have a hard time believing in the paranormal.

Brownstone Boy #2: Nah, he just said you guys are full of crap and that's why you went out of business.

Not that this is necessarily a bad thing for anyone who loved take 1, and is chomping at the bit for a reprise. Ghostbusters II is equally as quotable, is laden with memorable special effects and features a sublime cast of comedy royalty.

Dana: Okay, but after dinner, don't put any of those old cheap moves on me. It's different now.

Peter Venkman: Oh, no! I have all NEW cheap moves.



OK, so the plot is nonsense, the chief villain is a crusty old painting and he's defeated by warbling a Christmas carol. Hey, you can't have everything.

It's gaming adaptation - developed by Foursfield, published by Activision - is a fairly typical movie license title, comprising three mini-games based on pivotal scenes extracted from its celluloid counterpart. Spanning multiple genres, stitched together with digitised stills and a quirky remix of the legendary theme tune to form a coherent narrative, the game attempts to mirror rather than expand upon the movie's premise.



"I've said it about the Ocean movie tie-ins, and it's true of GBII, that rather than amounting to one large, flowing game, the sections may as well be three different games, none of which is particularly addictive. As the player's only motivation is to see the following stage, it offers pretty poor value for money."

Amiga User International (40%, February 1990)

I'll let the instruction manual bring you up to date.

"Five Years Later...

Ghostbusters doesn't exist anymore! The last real job they had involved bubbling up a 100-foot Marshmallow man and blowing the top three floors off an uptown high rise for which they were sued. The citizens of New York believing as time passed that they had been victims of a colossal hoax.

The Ghostbusters team now earn their living hiring themselves at parties, running occult bookshops and appearing on seedy occult TV programmes.



It's wintertime and the New Year is just around the corner. Dana Barrett has returned to live in the city with her baby son Oscar.



The city seems even more paranoid than she remembers it. She is returning from the store laden with groceries when the buggy Oscar is travelling in begins to jolt forward. The brakes unlock themselves. She reaches towards the handlebars, but the buggy rolls forward just out of her reach and stops. Surprised by the movement she reaches for the handlebar again, but this time the buggy rolls even further away. Alarmed now, Dana hurries after it, but the buggy keeps rolling down the street at ever-increasing speed.

Dana chases the buggy down the street, shouting to passing pedestrians for help, but every time someone reaches out to stop it, the buggy swerves and continues unchecked.



It comes to a dead stop in the middle of the street, a bus narrowly missing it by inches. Cars and trucks swerve and hit the brakes as Dana runs to the intersection and snatches up the baby. She hugs him close, deeply relieved, then looks at the buggy with the dawning awareness that the supernatural has re-entered her life.

When there's something strange in your neighbourhood, who you gonna call?

GHOSTBUSTERS!"



As with so many IP-oriented titles, Ghostbusters II was designed, produced, tested and distributed at breakneck pace in order to coincide with hype generated by the movie's theatrical premiere. In this case, 16th June 1989. It missed the mark by a long shot, arriving in time for the Christmas present-buying melee, supporting the suspicion that this projected deadline was absurd to begin with. No surprises there.

Initial ambitious creativity nixed by practicalities and publisher meddling, what ultimately landed was an abridged affair that requires a meagre fifteen minutes to complete once mastered.

Regardless, Foursfield are to be commended for the excellent presentation and accurate replication of three prudently selected sequences from the movie. An achievement that really hits home when you realise that the only source material available to them at the time was the screenplay, given that the movie was still a work in progress upon commencement. They were treated to an early preview showing of the movie along with various film critics, though by this stage it was too late to apply their emerging impressions of it to the gaming interpretation. Kind of

like taking an exam and then revising for it after the 'pens down' bell rings!



Con Ed Supervisor Fianella: What's going on here? Hey, what's the story?

Peter Venkman: Hey what? You boneheads are going to come to harass me on again? I got 3 thousand phone lines grounded here, I got about 8 million miles of cable I gotta check, you're gonna come and shake my monkey tree again?

Con Ed Supervisor Fianella: What are you talking about buddy, the phone lines are over there.

Peter Venkman: (Turns to Egon) What did I say to you?

(Begins slapping Egon's hardhat)

Peter Venkman: Those phone lines are over there. What did I say? How many times?

First Cop: Hey, hey. You're not with Con Ed, or the phone company, we've checked. So, tell me another one.

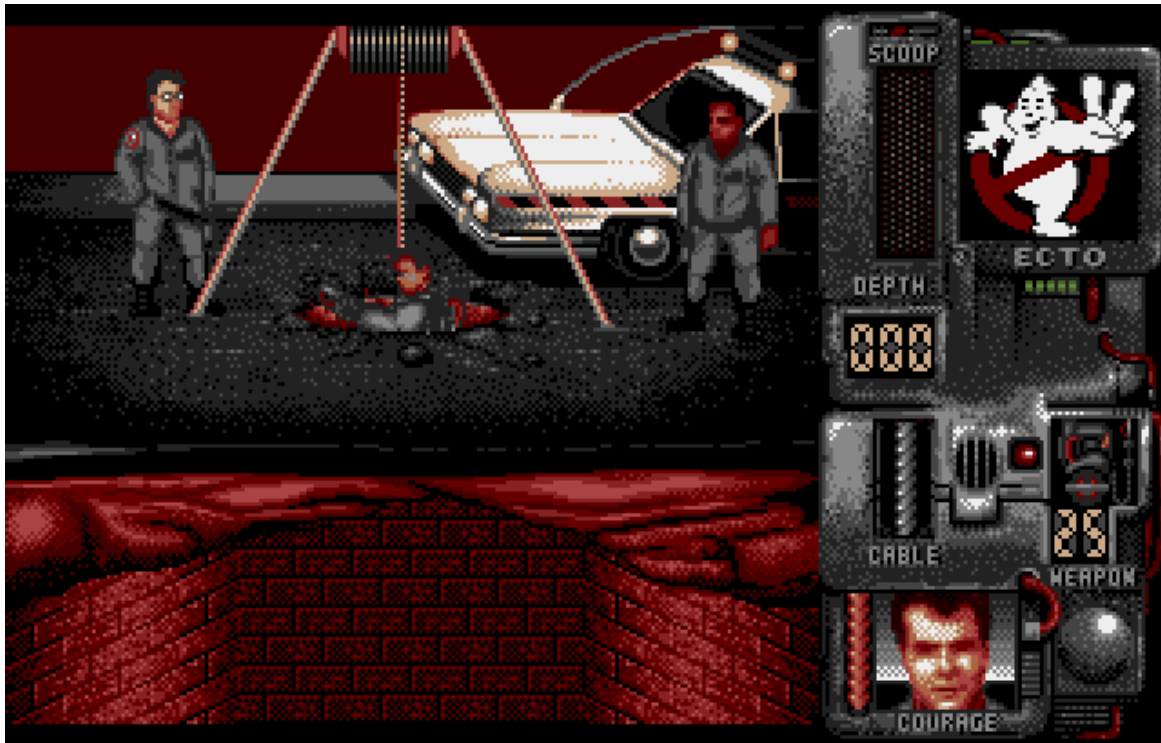
Peter Venkman: (Thinking of another excuse) I got a major gas leak here! What do you think all of this is coming from, the sky?



Level 1 introduces the premise, reflecting the movie's early expository groundwork. Attempting to establish a cause for the bizarre, possessed pram incident described in the manual, Egon scans the environment for supernatural activity. His 'Psychokinetic Energy Meter' goes haywire in the middle of a chaotic road during New York's never-ending rush 'hour'. Thus, the team install a phoney roadworks operation in order to tunnel beneath to investigate.

Peter Venkman: Dana, the guys are going down to the sewer to check for slime stuff. And Egon thinks there may be a huge surge in cockroach breeding. Want to blow off this dinner thing and go with them?

Dana: Taxi!



Prosecutor: Dr. Venkman, would you please tell the court why you and your co-defendants took it upon yourselves to dig a very big hole in the middle of 1st Avenue?

Peter Venkman: Well, there are so many holes in 1st Avenue, we really didn't think anyone would notice.

Raymond, having been volunteered for the grisly task, descends through a drill-hole, deep into the bowels of the rancid, abandoned Van Horne transit system below to collect an ectoplasm sample.



(Egon and Ray are showing Peter and Winston their breakthrough with a slime specimen)

Egon: Go ahead, Ray!

Ray: (shouting at the slime) You! You worthless piece of slime! You ignorant disgusting blob!

(slime twitches)

Egon: You're nothing but an unstable short-chained molecule!

Ray: You foul obnoxious muck!

(bubbles dangerously with every insult)

Egon: You have a weak electrochemical bond!

(starts to bubble over)

Ray: I have seen some disgusting crud in my time, but you take the cake!

Peter Venkman: This is what you do with your spare time?

Egon: (talking about the mood slime after yelling at it) We're running tests to see if we can get an equally strong positive response.

Peter Venkman: What kind of tests?

Ray: Well, we sing to it, talk to it, and say supportive, nurturing things to it.

Peter Venkman: You're not sleeping with it, are you, Ray?

(Ray doesn't answer, but stares intently at Egon)

Peter Venkman: (noticing Egon, teasingly) You hound.

Winston: It's always the quiet ones.

Egon: (clears throat, and hastily changes the subject) How 'bout the kinetic test?

Following scientific analysis in Egon's laboratory, it's ascertained that the agitation of this sentient slime is a by-product of the citizens' hostility and contempt for one another. According to Ghostbusters co-writer/actor, the sadly late Harold Ramis, this McGuffin was intended to serve as a metaphor for urban decay. Ghosts are misery-chasers empowered to thrive through our own humanitarian failings.

Ray: Mr Mayor, we're here tonight because a psychomagnatheric slime flow of immense proportions is building up beneath the city.

The Mayor: Psycho-what?

Egon: Psychomagnatheric.

Peter Venkman: Big word, big word.

Egon: Negative human emotions that are forming into a vicious ectoplasm with *explosive* supernormal potential.

The Mayor: Can somebody speak English here?

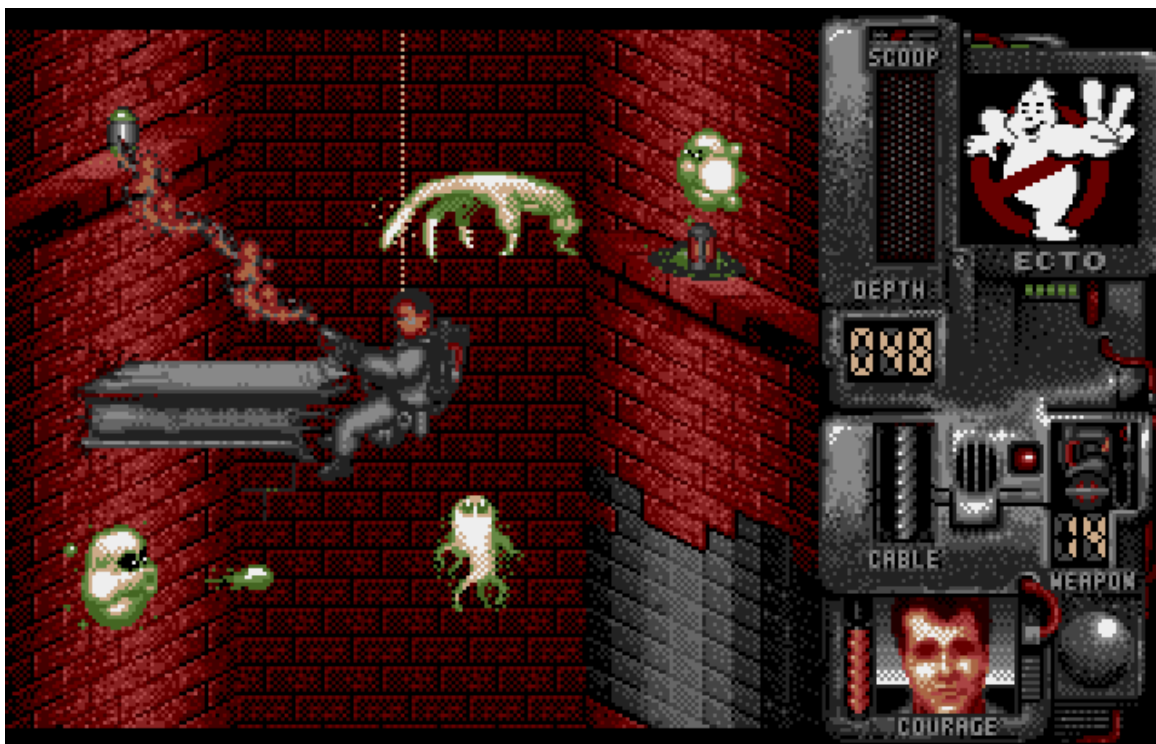
Winston: Uh yeah. Your honor, what we're trying to say is all of the bad feelings. You know hate, anger and the vibes of the city are turning into this *sludge*. I didn't believe in it either. But, we just went for a swim in it and end up almost killing each other.

On the way down through the air shaft, all manner of ghastly, ghoulish apparitions impede progress from every conceivable angle, chipping away at our limited courage reserves. Represented by a portrait of Ray's face, the more agonised the expression, the worse his state of mind. A nice touch also seen in Batman, released the same year.



Hit rock bottom and we lose our grip on the abseiling rope, slipping away into the deadly ooze. That's assuming the sawing

hand wraiths don't hack through it first. Irritating cretins!

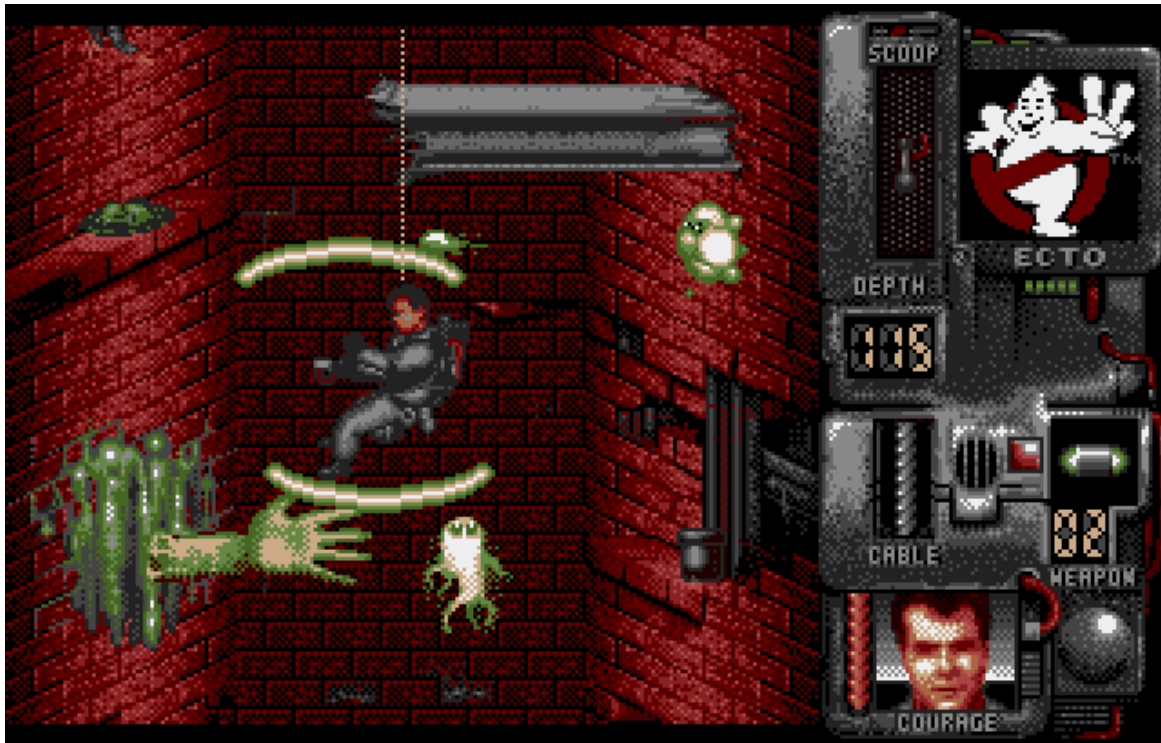


"It's not really a bad game, but it's about as user-friendly as a frisky stoat (i.e. not very), which would be merely annoying if the end results were worth all the trouble. But, as you might have guessed by now, I can't really say that they are."

Your Sinclair (62 degrees)

The trick is to collect multiple components comprising a mechanical slime scoop, positioned at fixed intervals along the tunnel. Somehow these are acquired by touching them with your feet. This must be a party trick Ray picked up making guest appearances at all those kid's birthday shindigs.

We begin armed only with a proton pack, though can also find PKR bombs and shields lying around on some platforms jutting out from the walls. Additional proton pack top-ups too. We'll need them too. This level is so tough most people stomp off in a tantrum before getting anywhere close to the base of the tunnel. I'm special, I can beat it easily. I'm also a shameless cheat.



Reach the bottom unscathed - collecting elixir potions to replenish health - and the sampling process is conducted automatically, whisking us off to the next level.



Although this level takes inspiration from the movie, a huge dollop of artistic license was applied to transform it into a playable entity. Had it been a carbon copy translation, Ray would reach the pink river of slime unhindered and only then encounter a single amorphous blob that shows a casual interest in investigating his dangling feet. That would hardly have lent itself to a fun arcade experience.

The Oliver twins in their YouTube commentary/let's play noted that this scene was originally to be much longer, however, was abridged to around a minute in the final cut, making the game's emphasis on it seem a bit overblown. Perhaps initially the plan was for Ray to face more supernatural threats at this juncture, though that wouldn't have made much sense since the ooze's potency hadn't yet reached its zenith.

What Foursfield settled upon makes sense, except maybe for the reason the scoop has been de-constructed and scattered across multiple ledges in a clandestine 'sewer' previously buried under a layer of concrete and a manhole. That said, it's an infuriatingly difficult introduction to the game, which is unlikely to invite 'one more go' appeal.

Once Ray is hauled back out of the air shaft via a winch, in the movie, the erstwhile Ghostbusters are arrested for illegally practising supernatural investigation, unwittingly disrupting a power cable, eliciting a city-wide blackout.

It can't have been encouraging that only bargain basement lawyer, Rick Moranis, was on hand to lead their defence. Now if the prosecutors had a sense of humour, he'd have freed the Ghostbusters with his comically incompetent facial expressions alone! Then he goes on to deliver or tee up some of the best lines of all.

Louis Tully: Your Honor, ladies and gentleman of the audience, I don't think it's fair to call my clients frauds. Sure, the blackout was a big problem for everybody. I was trapped in an elevator for two hours and I had to make the whole

time. But I don't blame them. Because one time, I turned into a dog and they helped me. Thank you.

(the courtroom is in bewildered silence)

Egon: Very good, Louis. Short, but pointless.

Standing trial for such crimes, the judge's ranting incites our retrieved slime sample to erupt, emancipating the spirits of two convicted killer brothers he previously executed by way of 'old sparky'.

Judge Wexler: Peter Venkman, Raymond Stantz, Egon Spengler,

(yells)

Judge Wexler: Stand up! Get up!

(the Ghostbusters stand up)

Judge Wexler: You too, Mr Tully.

(Louis stands up)

Judge Wexler: (furious) I find guilty on all charges. I order to pay fines in the amount of \$25,000 each...

(the mood slime burbles; Ray notices it)

Judge Wexler: ... and I sentence you to 18 months in the City Correctional Facility at Riker's Island.

Ray: Egie, she's twitching.

Judge Wexler: (yells) I'M NOT FINISHED!

(slime continues to boil)

Judge Wexler: On a more personal note, let me just go on record as saying that there's no place for fakes, charlatans...

Egon: Uh, your honor?

Judge Wexler: (cuts Egon off) Shut up! Or tricksters like you in decent society!

Peter Venkman: Your honor, this is important.

Judge Wexler: You play on the gullibility of innocent people!

Ray: Yes, sir...

Judge Wexler: Be quiet!

Ray: But...

(points to the bubbling mood slime as it spills over)

Judge Wexler: (yelling) If my hands weren't tied by the alterable fetters of the law, then I would invoke the tradition of our illustrious forbears, reach back to a purer, sterner justice

(screaming at the top of his lungs)

Judge Wexler: and have you BURNED AT THE STAKE!

(the ghosts of the Scoleri brothers bursts from the slime; the jury members, many visitors and the prosecutor are all frightened)

Ray: (amazed) Wow!

Judge Wexler: (shocked and frightened) Oh, my God! The Scoleri Brothers!



(Wexler leaps from his bench as the ghosts attempt to attack him. He then crawls to Louis and the now-prosecuted Ghostbusters)

Judge Wexler: (yells) The Scoleri Brothers!

Ray: Friends of yours?

Judge Wexler: I've tried them for murder! Gave them the chair!

Prosecutor: So, you're saying that the supernatural is your exclusive province?

Peter Venkman: Kitten, I think what I'm saying, is that sometimes, s**t happens, someone has to deal with it, and who ya gonna call?



Containing the threat as only the Ghostbusters know how, they are granted a reprieve from conviction. Hence, are conferred free rein to revive their operation with a view to protecting the city from further phantasmal outbreaks.

Which would be fantastic news for all concerned had they not soon after been incarcerated in a secure psychiatric unit by the mayor's overzealous assistant for drawing too much attention to the city's haunting issues in the run-up to an election.

(the Ghostbusters have been committed to a mental hospital)

Ray: As I explained before, we think the spirit of a 17th-century Moldavian tyrant is alive and well in a painting at the Manhattan Museum of Art.

Psychiatrist: Uh-huh, and are there any other paintings in the museum with bad spirits in them?

Egon: You're wasting valuable time. He's drawing strength from a psychomagnotheric slime flow that's been collecting under the city.

Psychiatrist: Yes, tell me about the slime.

Winston: It's very potent stuff. We made a toaster dance with it.

(motions to Peter)

Winston: And a bathtub tried to eat his friend's baby.

Psychiatrist: A bathtub?

Peter Venkman: (with his head buried in his arms in despair) Don't look at me. I think these people are completely nuts.

Turning up at a fancy fine dining restaurant doused in spook gloop certainly won't have helped their cause!

Peter Venkman: (to his very agitated, slime-covered fellow Ghostbusters in the restaurant) Boys, boys, you're scaring the straights, okay? Is there any way we can do this tomorrow?

Luckily, the mayor himself recognises that true madness lies in locking up your saviours, so arranges their immediate release.



The Mayor: What the hell is going on? It's pandemonium out there!

Hardemeyer: Yes, I know. We're working on it!

The Mayor: Great. While you're working on it, I'm going down as the mayor who let New York get sucked down into the tenth level of hell! All right, we got no choice. Call the Ghostbusters.



Maybe they could fetch a ladder and you could console one another while you melt?

Hardemeyer: Wait! Now I'm sure there's another way.

The Mayor: Jack, I spent an hour last night in my bedroom talking to Fiorello LaGuardia and he's been dead for 40 years. Now where are the Ghostbusters?

Hardemeyer: Uh, they're not available.

The Mayor: What do you mean they're not available?

Hardemeyer: Well, I had them committed to the psychiatric ward at Parkview Hospital.

The Mayor: You what?

Hardemeyer: They were threatening to go to the press! I was protecting your interests!

The Mayor: Oh yeah?

Hardemeyer: Uh-huh!

The Mayor: Well, you can stop protecting my interests. You have exactly three minutes to clear out. You're fired!

Hardemeyer: But the election! You're making a big mistake, Mr. Mayor!

The Mayor: Harry! Remove this man from the building and get me the Ghostbusters!

Skipping over a huge portion of the movie, next on the roster is a trip downtown to visit the Statue of Liberty, bringing the concrete colossus to life with the power of love-energised slime.



(At the foot of the Statue of Liberty)

Peter Venkman: Kinda makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Winston: Wonder what?

Peter Venkman: Whether she's naked under that toga. She *is* French. You know that.

A tad inconvenient selecting an inanimate sky-scraping lump of rock-solid mortar and metal to take on Vigo you might imagine. But, you know, it had to be a universally recognised symbol of hope if the Ghostbusters were to assemble a united citizen army to dissipate the ectoplasm encasing and making a despot sanctuary of the museum.

(after failing to break through the ectoplasm surrounding the Museum)

Egon: That slime mold is pulsing with evil. It would take a tremendous amount of positive energy to crack that shell and I seriously doubt there's enough goodwill left in this town to do it.

Ray: You know, I just can't believe things have gotten so bad in this city that there's no way back. I mean, sure, it's dirty, it's crowded, it's polluted, it's noisy and there's people all around who'd just as soon step on your face as look at you. But come on! There's got to be a few sparks of sweet humanity left in this burned-out 'burg and we just have to figure out a way to mobilize it.



If this can happen to the Atari 2600 in 1992, anything's possible!

Egon: He's right. We need something that everyone in this town can get behind, we need... a symbol!

Ray: Something that appeals to the best in each and every one of us.

Egon: Something good.

Winston: Something decent.

Peter Venkman: Something pure.

(They are all looking at the image of the Statue of Liberty on the Ecto-1's license plate)



(piloting the Statue of Liberty)

Egon: We're running out of time, Ray, it's almost midnight. Can't you make her go any faster?

Ray: I'm afraid the vibrations will shake her to pieces. We should have padded her feet.

Egon: I don't think they make Nikes in her size, Ray.

Peter Venkman: Hey, she's tough. She's a harbor chick!



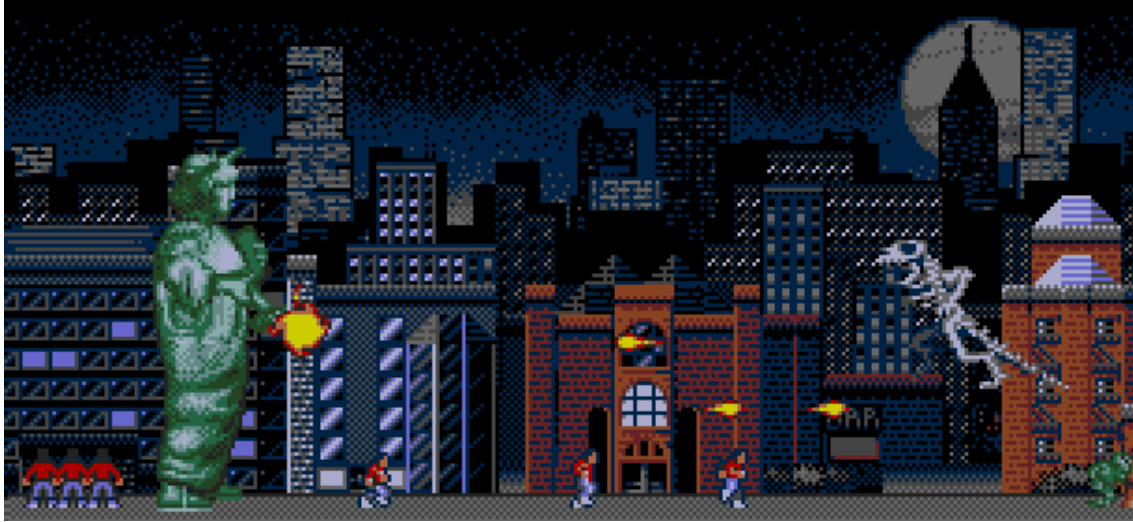
"The second section is a scrolling spook 'em up of mind-warping subtlety." - **Amstrad Action (94%, January 1990)**

In the movie, piping 'Your Love Has Lifted Me Higher And Higher' through a Sony Walkman (TM) is sufficient to get the positive vibes flowing and her feet shuffling along Broadway. Foursfield's incarnation drops this detail, which is a shame since I owned that exact model at the time and it would have been nice to see it

pixelated. They were fifty quid in Argos at the time. When I sold it on eBay years later it fetched about a fiver - clearly no-one cared about the movie connection.



Stomping through the streets of New York in charge of the 151-foot-tall monstrosity we shoot fireballs from our torch to keep the assorted revenants at bay. These include the reanimated bones of a dinosaur, as reported to the police in the movie.



Being hit depletes our slime supply, as does fireball generation. Libby - as she's known in the manual - walks automatically, leaving us to control the trajectory of her fiery projectiles. It's about as basic a shoot 'em up as you'll ever encounter.



Nuking a menagerie of spectres causes ectoplasm to be deposited on the ground where it can be scooped up by the

philanthropic citizens of New York, who use it to tip the mood balance in a positive direction.

Our supporters hang back close to the monument's feet unless instructed to fetch, which we do using the space bar. Press once to cajole them one way, and again to reverse their direction.



Replenishing Libby's supply of recycled feel-good statue fuel allows her to keep pumping out fireballs and continue the journey to the art museum. A critical destination previously identified as the source of maleficent influence by the flow of underground negatively charged slime.

Egon: (Takes out a picture of Vigo) What the hell is that?

(picks up his giant magnifying glass)

Ray: I know what it is.

(Unbeknownst to Ray and Egon, the door is suddenly locked)

Ray: I've seen this before.

Egon: Where?

Ray: Remember when you had me dangling like a worm on a hook 100 feet below 1st Avenue?

(Shows the slime on the picture)

Ray: That's the river of slime.

(to the Mayor)

Peter Venkman: Lenny, have you been out on the street lately, do you know weird it is out there? We've taken our own headcount, there seems to be 3 *million* completely miserable assholes living in the Tri-State area.

Hardemeyer: (In disbelief) Please?

Peter Venkman: I beg your pardon, 3 million and *one*.

Hardemeyer: Hey.

Ray: And what *fuggy brain* here doesn't realize, that if we don't do something fast this whole place is gonna blow like a frog on a hot plate.

Hardemeyer: (In disbelief) Yeah right.

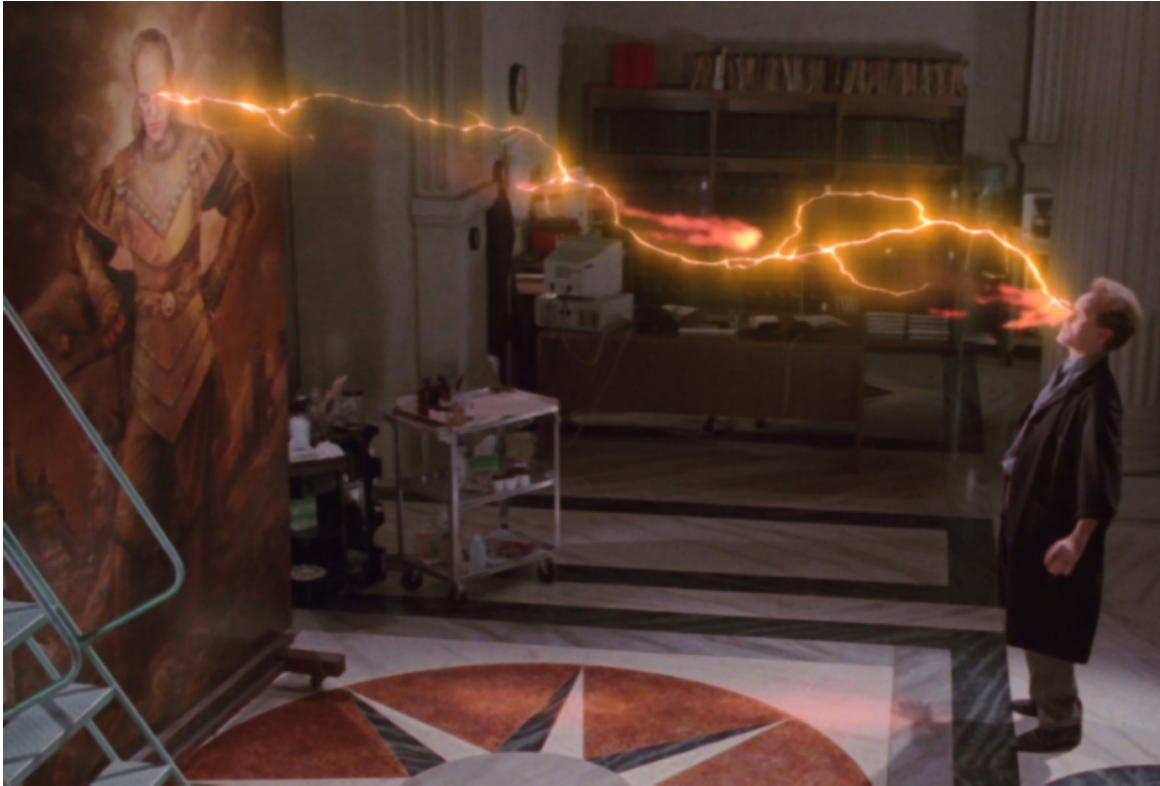
The Mayor: What do you want me to do, go on television and tell 3 million people they have to be *nice* to each other?

(Begins to walk off)

The Mayor: Being miserable and treating other people like dirt is every New Yorker's god-given right. Your 2 minutes are up, good night gentlemen.



If we can reach Vigo before New Year dawns we stand a chance of preventing his transformation back into a corporeal entity, exploiting Sigourney Weaver's baby, Oscar, as a host vessel. Incidentally, Oscar was played by twins in the movie, Hank and William Deutschendorf. Tragically, Hank committed suicide in 2017 at the age of 28 following a prolonged battle with schizoaffective disorder. Previously the brothers went into business together as martial arts mentors.



Vigo: Find me a child that I might live again!

Janosz: Yes. A child. A child!

Janosz: (confused) A child?

(Vigo electrocutes Janosz's eyes)

Janosz: (possessed with the evil power) A child.



Something else that's never explained is why the host has to be Dana's baby, or even a baby at all. Surely, if successful in taking charge of this useless lump, Vigo would be as ineffective as a drooling, babbling, immotile tot? Why not body-snatch a seven-foot-tall wrestler instead? That ought to make subjugating the world's population a smidgen easier. It would have come naturally to the late Wilhelm von Homburg who played Vigo as he had previously worked as a professional boxer and wrestler. He died of prostate cancer in 2004 aged 63.

"Frighteningly good graphics immediately set this game apart from everyday film licences, the statue being the centrepiece."

"Even better than the movie."

Amstrad Action (94%, January 1990)

Level 3, rather prematurely, represents the movie's finale. Stationed in the Museum of Art, it revolves around rescuing baby Oscar from the clutches of sixteenth-century Moldavian tyrant

and magician, Vigo the Carpathian, before he becomes possessed.



Egon: Vigo the Carpathian. Born 1505, died 1610.

Peter Venkman: 105 years old, he hung in there, didn't he?

Ray: He didn't die of old age, either. He was poisoned, stabbed, shot, hung, stretched, disembowelled, drawn and quartered.

Peter Venkman: Ouch.

Winston: Guess he wasn't too popular at the end, huh?

Egon: No, not exactly a man of the people. Also known as Vigo the Cruel, Vigo the Torturer, Vigo the Despised, and Vigo the Unholy.

Peter Venkman: Wasn't he also Vigo the Butch?

Ray: And dig this, there was a prophecy. Just before his head died, his last words were "Death is but a door. Time is but a window. I'll be back."

Vigo was voiced by Max von Sydow, much to the *body* actor's dismay. Wilhelm von Homburg (previously known as Norbert Grupe) only became aware of the switch upon watching the premiere! Naturally, he stormed out. To be fair though, his vocal work *was* pretty feeble. I've heard the audition.

Vigo: On a mountain of skulls, in the castle of pain, I sat on a throne of blood! What was will be! What is will be no more! Now is the season of evil!



Having broken through the ceiling of the historic building with the Statue of Liberty's torch, abseiling in from the roof, we control each of the Ghostbusters individually. Pushing down speeds up their acceleration, while pushing up causes the Ghostbusters to decelerate. Touchdown too fast and we're dead, land with a milder jolt and our heroes are only temporarily stunned. Lose more than two of four Ghostbusters and we're stuffed since teamwork is essential for this section.



Switching between them is as simple as tapping the spacebar. A ready-to-go thumbs-up indicates the one currently active, which I thought was a charming touch and clever way to keep you immersed in the fantasy.



A combination of two weapon types need to be deployed; a slime gun and the standard-issue proton phaser. Each Ghostbuster is assigned one or the other, though it's possible to swap weapons at any point, even to recover them from deceased team members. We hit return to enter the weapon selection screen and then use the joystick to control the cursor, hovering over the desired weapon and pressing fire to manipulate it.



Corroborating the events of the movie, we hear a chorus of 'Auld Lang Syne' - the citizens of New York singing in a synchronised effort to neutralize the slime enveloping the museum.

Janosz: Soon, the city will be mine and Vigo's... mainly Vigo's.



Inside we must incapacitate Vigo's lackey (Mary Poppins wannabe and Dana's boss), Janosz, to prevent him from interfering with our baby-rescue mission. We don't want to kill him (as irritating as he is!) so the slime gun needs to be wielded to keep him from snapping at our ankles until he regains his faculties.



Vigo: I, Vigo, the Scourge of Carpathia, the Sorrow of Moldavia, command you!

Janosz: (gets down on his hands and knees and starts bowing) O command me, lord!



As noted, we take Janosz out of the equation with the slime gun, causing him to vanish into the ether. Using the autofire button to pelt Janosz with projectile gunk in rapid succession will help to ensure his energy can't revitalise quickly enough to sustain him.



Ray: (dripping with good slime) Hey, man, let me tell you something. I love you.

Janosz: Yes? Well, I love you too.

(they hug)

Janosz: (on waking after being freed from his possession, singing) They will come from behind... Ah, ah... why am I drippings with goo?

Egon: You had a violent prolonged transformative psychic episode.

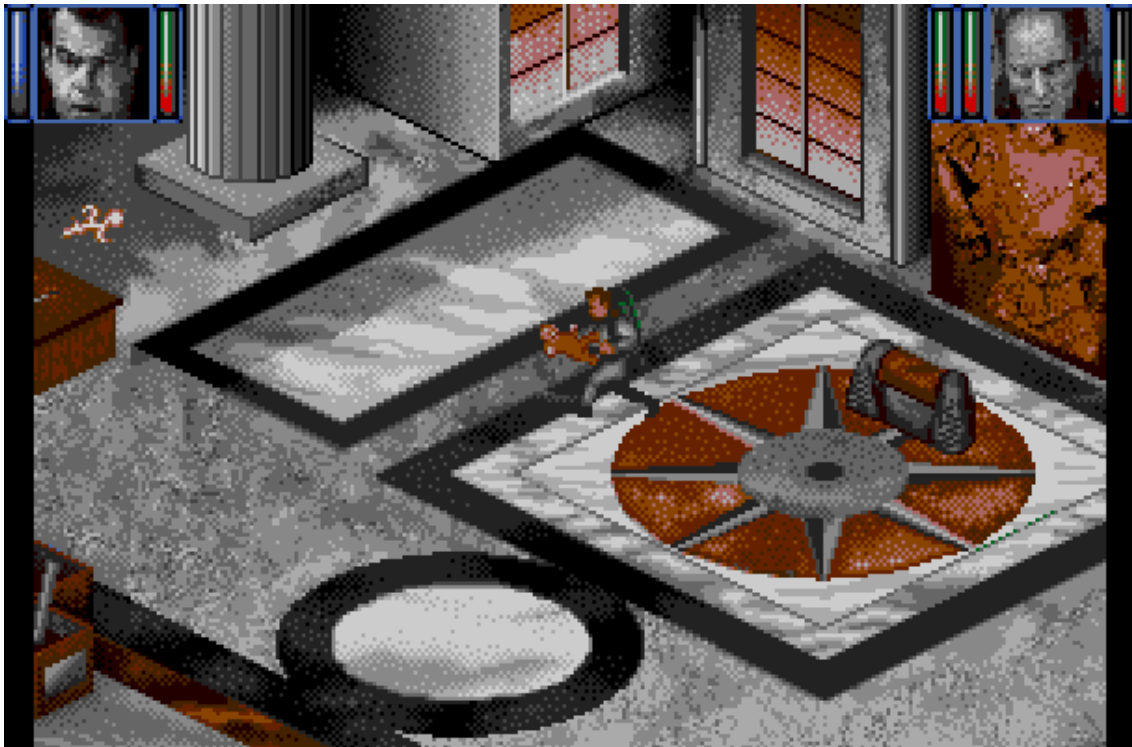
(Dana hands Oscar to Peter)

Dana: It's late, I really ought to put him down.

Peter Venkman: May I?

Dana: Yeah, if you want to.

Peter Venkman: (points in baby's face) You're short, your belly button sticks out too far, and you're a terrible burden on your poor mother.





Once Oscar is safely stashed away behind some storage boxes, Vigo manifests, emerging from his canvas prison. Luckily Vigo's power has been diminished by the throng of carollers outside, enabling us to coordinate two Ghostbusters to concentrate their proton pack beams on him simultaneously, driving him back into the painting from which he materialised. Well, actually he just sort of vaporises in the game to minimise the animation demands.

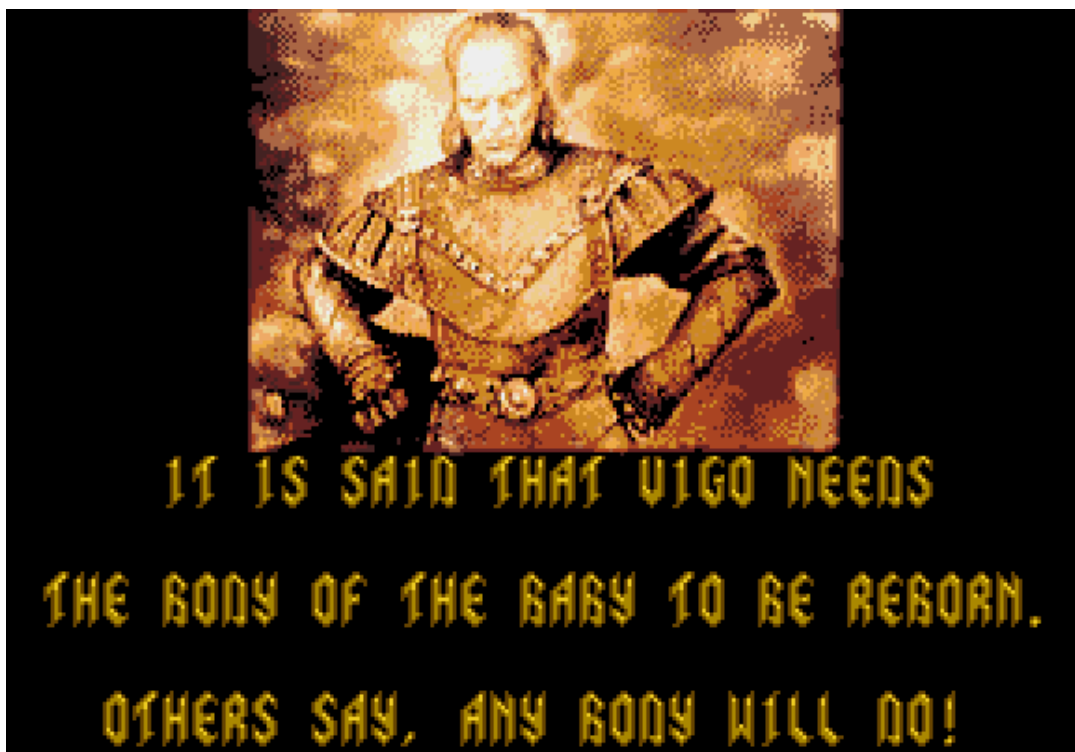
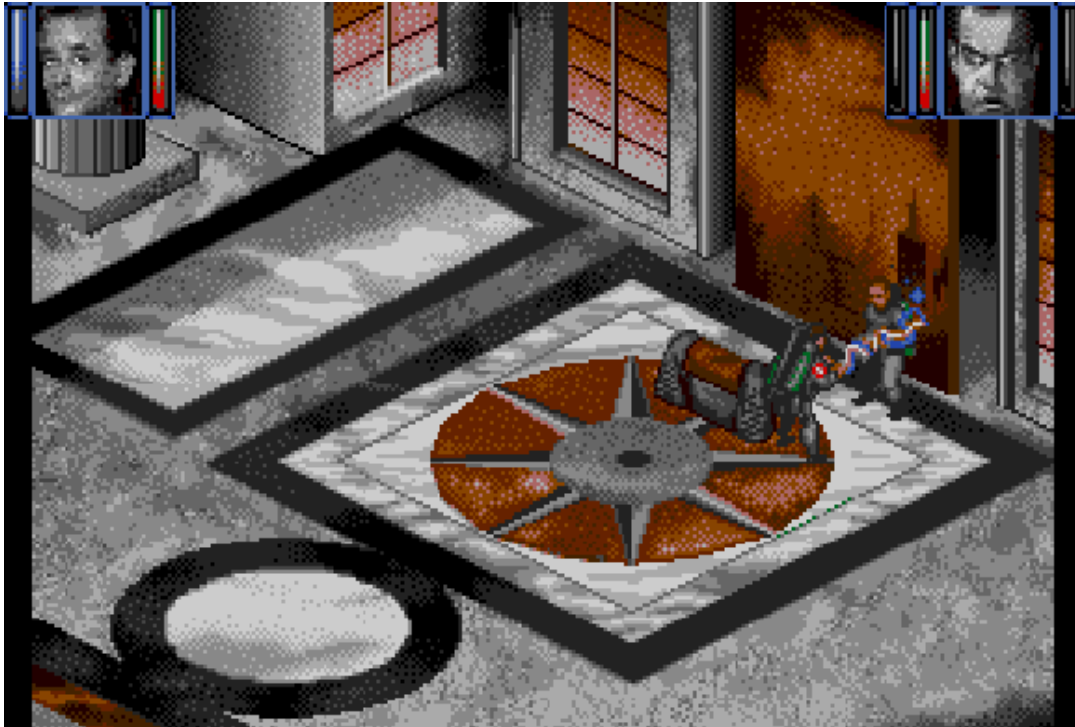


You may find that you have to dwindle down the painting's 'lifecycle' before it's possible to dispatch Vigo. It has a separate energy bar suggesting this would be necessary, yet players tend to report slightly different solutions. It's either randomised or buggy, I can't be sure which.

Peter Venkman: (while Vigo is holding Oscar) Not so fast, Vigo. Hey, Vigo, yeah, you, the bimbo with the baby. Didn't you know the big-shoulder look is out? You know, I have met some dumb blondes in my life, but you take the taco, pal. Only a Carpathian, will come back to life now and choose New York. Tasty pick, bonehead. If you had brain one in that huge melon on top of your neck, you'd be livin' the sweet life, out in southern California's beautiful San Fernando Valley.



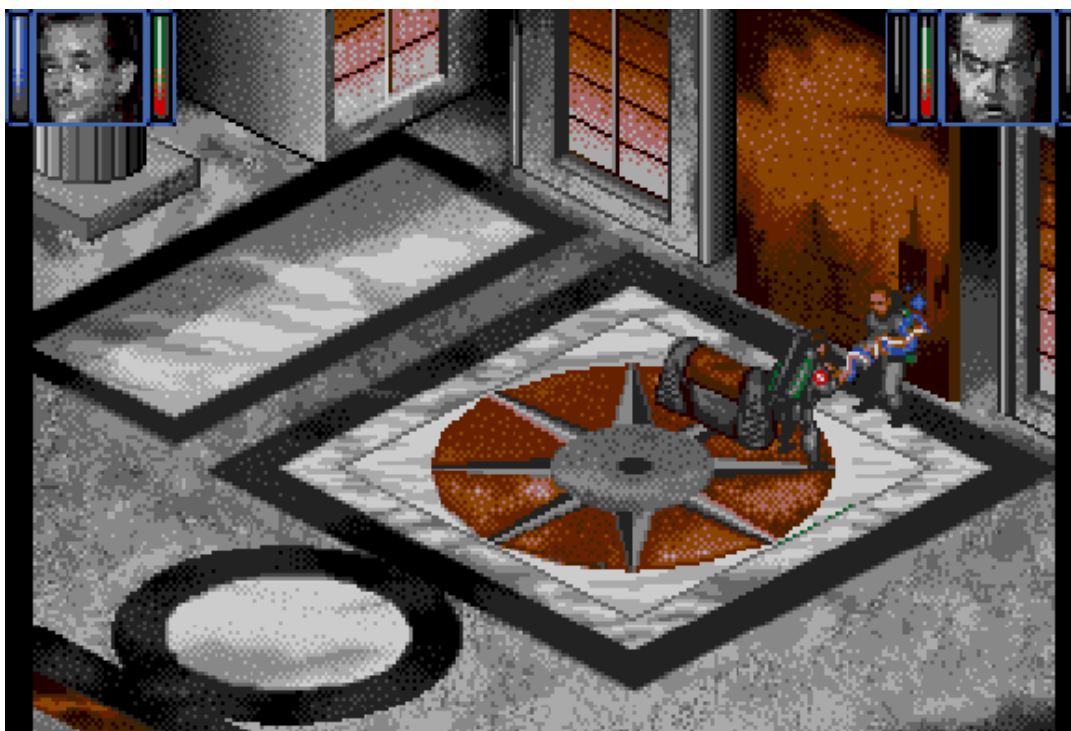
Again, watching the movie provides the answer to the game's final finale conclusion ending. Back for an encore, Vigo body-snatches Ray, forcing us to concentrate our photon streams on him to exorcise the invader.



The idea is not to kill him, only manoeuvre Ray closer to the painting and ultimately zap him into it, thereby vanquishing its

previous occupant, whitewashing the Ghostbusters into the frame to usurp his royal nastiness. I'm not sure how all this works scientifically and Egon is no longer around to ask (rest in peace Harold Ramis). We probably shouldn't probe *too* deeply anyway, the plot is already on shaky ground.

Let's stick to the practicalities, shall we? Two Ghostbusters will get the job done faster, nevertheless, we can get by playing solo if the others are dead by this stage.



Again, I'm not sure if I beat the game as Foursfield intended or if I won by accident. In any case, a single Ghostbuster and plenty of patience was sufficient. Ray simply vanishes much like Vigo so we'll have to imagine the way the more climactic scene unravels in the movie.



Of the three levels, this is the one that exhibits the most innovation. Taking charge of all *four* Ghostbusters sequentially (Yes, *even* Winston, despite being black! Gasp!), we can switch between them at will, exchange weapons as in an RPG and approach the challenge through the combination of a variety of techniques.

This is the one level in which it's not possible to cheat, seeing as the trainers available aren't configured to be effective here. Luckily it's the easiest of the three to beat legitimately, which explains how I managed to capture the moment for posterity on YouTube.

What is a pain to figure out initially, becomes effortless upon repeat attempts - as with the previous levels - reducing replayability potential to zero. Bustin' should really make me feel more... umm, *good*.

Originally this level was to entail meandering between various 3D isometric rooms rather than a single area, though this proved too problematic technically to apply across all systems so the idea was abandoned.

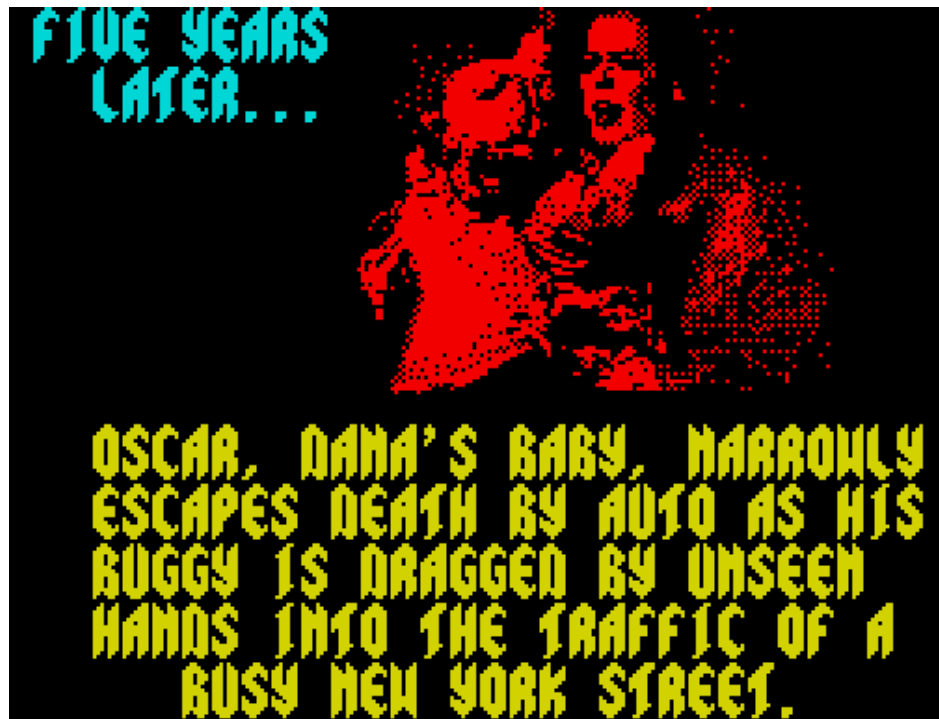
"I desperately hope the film is better than this! The incredibly bland looking first level offers zero challenge. Level two is playable but lacks any depth or holding power. As for the third, final and very anti-climatic section of the game... well, let's just say it's hideously bad to look at and play. A very bad value for money package."

Zzap! (39%, C64, February 1990)



"They're back! A new threat has arisen from the world of the supernatural, and the Ghostbusters are recalled into service to save NY from the evil Vigo, in a three-level bonanza of sewer exorcism, Statue of Liberty controlling and, finally, Vigo destroying. The three subgames are, um, unusual, but they are competently programmed making them playable if not particularly addictive. A good buy at this price."

Computer and Video Games (82%, Spectrum, September 1991)



"Every level is like a different game, all three of which are extremely playable, and beautifully presented. Although each level is easy to get into, it takes plenty of practice before you can finish any. My only gripe is the awful loading system, the whole thing is reloaded every time you start, creating annoyingly long gaps between games. All in all, a game that will appeal to almost everyone."

Commodore User (84%, Amiga, January 1990)



"Despite being in shades of yellow and orange, the digitised film pictures are quite good, as is the theme tune. In-game graphics make good use of Mode two, colours liberally used and blockiness kept down to a minimum. Overall, it compares quite well with the 16-bit versions visually, although scrolling's on the jerky side. Sound effects are harsh and noisy but adequate for the Amstrad."

The Games Machine (84%, Amstrad, January 1990)



"Although sound is okay with two sampled tunes and a nice rendition of Auld Lang Syne, the graphics are mostly only adequate. Each of the sections is playable enough in a simple way, but even with the inter-level sequences they don't really gel into one good game. Perhaps a couple more sections would have made a difference, but as it is this is poor value for money."

Zzap! (60%, Amiga, January 1990)

"If you have the patience of a saint and can ignore the hideous multi-load delay, then there is a graphical treat in store."

Commodore Format (43%, C64, August 1991)



"Presentation is high and adds appeal to a game which, despite the mediocre last section, is quite addictive and succeeds in capturing the atmosphere of the film. You must have already seen Ghostbusters II, the movie. The game will do as well - or better"

The Games Machine (87%, Atari ST, January 1990)

"If you want great gaming fun, give the Ghostbusters a call - they're back in business."

Amstrad Action (94%, January 1990)



To say that critical reception was 'a mixed bag' would be a criminal understatement. Despite the basic game structure being replicated across all 8 and 16-bit platforms, review scores dispersed to polar opposite extremes.

"Sadly, Ghostbusters II looks like being one of the biggest turkeys you are likely to see this Christmas. It fails to succeed both as a film conversion and as a game in its own right. Interestingly enough the film was originally going to be called The Last of the Ghostbusters. After this, I hope it is."

ACE (25%, January 1990)



Amstrad Action rated their port (the Atari ST/Amiga being the lead platform) a staggeringly rhapsodic 94%, whilst every other iteration received dire to above-average appraisals.

Janosz: (passing by an assistant working at a desk)
Everything you are doing is bad. I want you to know this.



A running theme was the paucity of levels and brevity of those that *are* present. Ghostbusters II co-designer, Anna Ufnowska, in a comment left on the game's Lemon Amiga profile in February 2013 explained that this was beyond their control, the team's earnest creativity crushed by publishers, Activision.

"Writing this was a nightmare. We had to come up with a game that also played on all formats including the awful Spectrum. Any ideas that we came up with that the Amiga and Atari could handle were ditched as impossible for the Spectrum. I still have nightmares when I hear the music. I hated it and felt ashamed to say I'd worked on it.

All ended with fighting between us and Activision for our money and a follow-through of people fighting with us for bonuses we never received either. Finished us off really which is probably what some of the publishers wanted after the money came in. Activision UK closed down shortly afterward."

Activision failing to recognise that the various host systems come equipped with unique strengths and weaknesses was idiocy. There's no reason one single design should have to fit all, especially with different teams working on the ports. You simply adapt the structure to suit any limitations imposed to work around them. Exactly what happens when you downgrade a coin-op cabinet for the home micros.

Already whittled down to the bare bones, early magazine news snippets make it clear that the game was further emaciated prior to release. At least two of the major publications reported Foursfield's intention to deliver a quadruplet of stages. As we know, one fell by the wayside somewhere between the heavily edited blueprint and final product.

"Force Field, the programmers who wrote Time Scanner, are working on the Ghostbusters II game which is planned to have four different arcade scenarios. Activision are pitching

this as one of their smash hits for Christmas alongside Power Drift and Galaxy Force II.

Ghostbusters II, from Columbia Pictures, opens in the UK in December. Don't call us - we'll call you."

Crash (September 1989)

"The game will stick closely to the plot of the movie, featuring four main sections and music from the film soundtrack, written by soul superstar Bobby Brown."

Sinclair User (August 1989) referring to the single 'On Our Own' which remained in the US charts for 20 weeks. Cameotastically, Bobby also appears in the movie as a doorman.



Ghostbusters II received some utterly appalling critical assessments, yet it was the one published by ACE magazine that was to be singled out by Activision and made the target of vehement legal action. Only New Computer Express (beginning in December 1989) seems to have picked up on the furore,

exemplifying the incident to highlight the delicate, symbiotic relationship shared between gaming journalists and game publishers.

"Rights and duties of the reviewer

As New Computer Express goes to press this week, a tale begins to emerge of battle joined between Activision, publisher of the new computer game Ghostbusters II, and ACE, the influential computer entertainment magazine which has spoken toughly of the game in its January issue. Activision has reached for its lawyers in a bid to resolve what is clearly a heated argument.

While it might appear at first sight that this is material more for the law journals and the heavy newspapers' media pages than the Express comment column, the outcome of the row should be of interest to all software consumers as well as to journalists, publishers, lawyers and other software houses. For somewhere close to the heart of the case is a fundamental issue regarding the relationship not between a manufacturer and the organ which reviews its product, but between a magazine and its readers.

Great expectations

The first Ghostbusters game - a spin-off of the blockbusting movie of that name - proved to be the biggest-selling computer game of all time, and Activision is clearly hoping to clean up again with the release of the sequel. The game has come to the market almost simultaneously with the theatrical first run of the new movie, and the publisher has spent freely on an advertising campaign calculated to produce maximum sales across the lucrative Christmas and New Year period.

Precise details of the pseudonymously-written review which so infuriated Activision are unknown, except that it scored the game at 251 out of a possible 1,000 - the rating alone will be interpreted by readers as indicating that the game is

a complete turkey. Having learned of the content of the review, Activision reacted quickly by demanding that the offending item was withdrawn from publication, and when EMAP - ACE's publisher - refused, the game's publisher consulted its lawyers about seeking an injunction to prevent the magazine from being distributed to the news-stands.

Alleged defamation

Although none of the parties has yet been prepared to make an official statement on the matter, it is also known that both Activision and Columbia Pictures - distributor of the movie Ghostbusters II - are consulting further with their legal representatives about the possibility of libel suits over what both companies regard as defamatory remarks in the review. Activision is also considering suing for consequential loss after the distributor, Centresoft, allegedly attempted to return stocks of the game.

Activision is also known to be threatening to withdraw advertising from EMAP's range of titles - support which ran into six figures during 1989.

One needs to step away from these details to consider the full implications of what is potentially at stake in the case in hand.

The relationship between publishers and manufacturers - in many other fields as well as computer journalism - is rarely a purely remote one. It is not unusual for reviewers and editors to be wined and dined by manufacturers, for them to receive small promotional gifts or even be invited on amusing jaunts abroad to visit anything from rather dull manufacturing plants to exciting Hollywood film studios - though naturally any editor will stress that nothing sinister should be read into this practice. It is also clearly the case that most publications receive a substantial part of their income from product advertising, and this alone will discourage publishers and

editors from taking gratuitous sideswipes, for only a fool bites the hand which feeds it.

Editorial integrity

But one should note the word 'gratuitous' in that last sentence, for it is an important one. Despite the low regard in which they are held by the public, the vast majority of journalists do have more than an inkling of what is implied by the word 'integrity' and carry round with them a sense of professional pride which would surprise people who judge us all by the standards of the national tabloids. Or if this statement fails to convince, consider the more mercenary argument that any publication worth its salt knows in the end that it stands or falls by the level of confidence with which it is regarded by its readers.

There is an implicit understanding between manufacturers/advertisers and magazines that, when all is said and done, an item submitted for review or a story for publication will be treated in an honest, unbiased way - whether the reaction is a positive or negative one, at least it will be objective.

Sometimes - and this is not aimed at the computer industry specifically - there will be unscrupulous suppliers who attempt to apply undue pressure both to publishers, through advertising sanctions, and to journalists in more subtle and personal ways to ensure that their products are satisfactorily hyped. Equally, there are surely occasions where journalists go off the rails and fail to live up to their side of the bargain, handling their copy in a manner dictated by personal rather than professional motives. It is fortunate that neither is a frequent occurrence.

One cannot comment on the rights and wrongs of whatever is going on in the current battle between EMAP and Activision, particularly since the full facts are far from public at this stage. But it is certainly fair to observe that we hope the

matter is eventually resolved in a manner which accurately establishes whether the mark has been overstepped by either side, rather than one in which the courts set an unsustainable precedent. The relationship between a magazine and its readers - of both a right and a duty to print honest comment - is one which concerns all of us, and one which must remain intact if the writing and indeed reading of reviews-oriented publications are to remain enjoyable and rewarding practices!"

The identity of the reviewer in question was no great mystery seeing ACE announced in the news section of their previous issue who would be allocated this particular joy/chore.

"Ghostbusters II, Activision

The film hasn't exactly bombed, and it hasn't exactly done that well either. It has just been overshadowed by things like Lethal Weapon II, the indomitable Batman, and the soon to be launched - Star Trek V - which also has a computer game conversion, and a red hot one t'boot. The game is apparently brilliant - though not reviewable as we go to press, and is high on Activision's list of titles to receive heavyweight hype, which should ensure a chart position. Gary Williams is Marshmallow Man."

ACE (issue 27, December 1989)



In January 1990 (issue 58), New Computer Express followed up on the still-effervescing story...

"Ghostbusters II; review problems

The influential computer entertainment magazine ACE was on sale last week despite problems with a leading software house concerning a games review.

Activision had been talking to its lawyers about ACE's review of its Christmas game Ghostbusters II (Express 57). An ACE reviewer gave the game the equivalent of 25 per cent - much of the computer press has given it fair to middling reviews.

Neither Activision nor the magazine's publisher EMAP are willing to discuss the matter. It had been feared that an injunction would be slapped on the magazine, preventing distribution and costing EMAP many thousands of pounds.

EMAP has said that it will stick by the opinions of all its reviewers. However, the firm is refusing to reveal the identity

of the Ghostbusters II reviewer. The article was credited to a pseudonym."

It wasn't until February 1990 that the bizarre, overblown kerfuffle was elucidated by ACE themselves. Well, rather Anna writing into ACE to express her contempt towards their journalistic erratum...

"Ghostbusters II 2 controversy

After five years in the games writing business from Kayleth through ISS (a game which you ACE Rated and feature in your Pink Pages each month but sold didderlysquat) we have learnt to be tolerant of all reviews good and bad.

We realise and accept that an opinion of a game is a very personal view. It can be hard on occasion when a product such as Ghostbusters - written in six months from the script without benefit of the film, which was still in production when we set to work - is thrashed so soundly, but there you go!

However, we feel we would like to point out a few inaccuracies to your review.

The Amiga version runs on two disks, not three as stated. Perhaps your reviewer - not up with the programming side - has difficulty with this. So as a guideline: two is generally identified in the following manner - hold a disk in each hand. If there are no disks left in the box then you have two disks to play with! Easy.

The ST runs on four single-sided disks, we could have produced two double-sided disks but this would not have been helpful to those owners of a single-sided drive. But one can't assume that a reviewer would see this difficulty.

We also wonder about the comment that "The Sound is very impressive sampled stuff - the Ghostbusters theme" and yet rates 0 in the rating box. Perhaps this discrepancy is indicative of the review or perhaps it isn't, who knows?

May all of the team at Foursfield take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. No doubt we will meet again in the review columns of 1990!

A note to Gary, who I am led to believe actually wrote the review. My real name appears at the bottom of this letter and in the spirit of free speech I would assume you will print this letter in full. If one is confident that one is speaking the truth, one does not need to adopt an alias.

Anna Ufnowska, Foursfield (programers of Ghostbusters 2)

The version of Ghostbusters 2 that we were sent consisted of three disks. We can only conclude that it was not a production copy. See the Blitter End this month for the correct Audio Rating - mistakes *do* sometimes happen and if they do, we will always rectify them at the earliest possible opportunity.

As for our review of Ghostbusters 2 or any game, we always stand-by what we write. If anybody agrees or disagrees with what we say, we always welcome their comments and opinions. We do, however, agree with you on the subject of pseudonyms. These will not be used again in this magazine under any circumstances."

"Trials and tribulations

Last month was actually a bumper issue for w-oopsies. To start with, we printed two entry forms for the Stockmarket, and the second gave the deadline as January 7th 1990. So what? Well, this just happens to mean that the entries are due in AFTER the next issue has appeared in the shops, which means that predicting 'next month's top games and software houses' isn't going to be all that tricky, is it? You can just look them up! Well, we're such decent folks that we'll stick by our guns and enter ALL correct entries in the prize draw. First one out takes the cake...

Then there was the number for Amstrad in the ACE Diary - this should read 0277 228888 and NOT 0222 228888 as printed. Apologies to all concerned.

And finally, the sound rating for Ghostbusters II, which we called 'very impressive', should obviously NOT have been zero, but eight. Since this was the one bright spark in an otherwise gloomy review, it's doubly sad that we should have slipped up. The setting system defaults to zero and in the rush the correct value wasn't entered."

Fair enough, ACE's blunders led to the game being misrepresented in certain areas, yet given that their other complaints held up to scrutiny, supported by multiple corroborating opinions from rival magazines, the disk quotient and sound comments seems like a drop in the ocean. Could Activision's complaints really, entirely be traced back to these two editorial faux pas? Why bother? Surely the damage was done by this stage?

I suppose for the designer at least, it's one thing to be excoriated for something you *did* do, and another thing entirely when you're harangued for totally fabricated 'offences'. You may as well set the record straight.

Plus, to be fair, the audio *is* the game's finest asset. Were Ray's horrified shrieks - elicited whilst swinging helplessly in the tunnel of terror - sampled from Scooby-Doo? Listen again now and you'll never be able to disassociate the two. If true, that's hilariously fitting for such pixelated caricatures that seem to pay homage to the cartoon more so than the movie.

Dave Lowe's rendition of Auld Lang Syne is unmistakably the indefatigable New Year's Eve favourite we've all been ineptly miming along to for the last 62 centuries. You can't ask for more than that since it's the traditional arrangement we hear in the movie. Is there an alternative? A hip-hop or garage interpretation maybe?



Your Love Keeps Lifting Me Higher is equally accurate, effectively immersing us in the movie magic mayhem Foursfield aimed to channel.

What Dave did to Ray Parker, Jr.'s treasured Ghostbusters theme tune isn't so bizarre when you consider that this 16-bit analogue may-well-possibly-maybe have been based on the revamp we hear in Ghostbusters II, co-written and performed by hip-hop band Run-DMC.

Otherwise, you might have argued it was a risky remix given the high esteem with which the original composition is held by fans of the franchise. Whatever it aspires to emulate, Dave's revision

is surprisingly satisfying without detracting from the legacy of its cherished antecedent.

Excellent music notwithstanding, anyone in the habit of reading game magazines *before* making their purchase decisions would know to steer clear, or at least wait for the budget re-release. At £10, or less for the 8-bit iterations, it's not such a bad proposition if you're a die-hard fan of the movie. If the game alone wasn't enough to swing it, perhaps the enticement of a complimentary balloon, badge or frisbee might have pushed you over the edge.

All interpretations do a superb job of evoking a selection of the movie's most memorable scenes, leaving you yearning to revisit the genuine article. That's what it's all about. Job done. The movie studio cash-in on revived interest in the source material and the game publisher piggybacks on the revered oeuvre of the cinematic offering.

"All in all, Ghostbusters II is something you're more likely to take a quick peek over someone's shoulder at rather than actually splash out on, and that's not particularly Activision's fault: it's because the whole idea of 16-bit film conversions is, let's face it, a bit crap."

Zero (69%, Amiga, January 1990)

Poorly received licensed games still translate to a Titanic-load of moolah, the games industry being one of the few in which you can win and fail simultaneously. A few ghosts in the machine never hurt the elimination business!

(the ghost of the R.M.S. Titanic appears in New York Harbor, and numerous ghostly figures emerge from it)

Dock Supervisor: Well, better late than never.

The Amiga version entered the sales charts at number 8 in February 1990 (see C&VG), and lingered until February 1992 in one form or another. It was re-released as a budget title by The Hit Squad and then repackaged as part of 'The Hollywood

Collection' alongside Batman The Movie, RoboCop, and Indiana Jones & The Last Crusade.

Overall (see the 'all formats' Gallop sales chart), Ghostbusters II ranked at no. 3 in the same month. Breaking this down equated to 5th position for the C64 version, 1st for the Amstrad CPC, and 3rd for the Atari ST and Spectrum offerings.

Not such a bad result for a game loathed in some quarters almost as much as the gimmicky 2016 Ghostbusters movie reboot. Despite inciting a raving backlash of unbridled malice, 'Answer the Call' raked in \$229.1 million at the box office. Due to its massive production costs the movie was still a disastrous flop both critically and financially, sadly proposing an argument in favour of doing things on the cheap and as quickly as possible.